

U.S. CUSTOMS IN BRIEF

YOUR CUSTOMS DECLARATION

You will receive a Customs declaration form on your flight or vessel before you return to the United States. You must fill out and sign the declaration form in its entirety. Families returning together may prepare a joint declaration. You must declare the total value of all articles acquired abroad and in your possession at the time you return. This includes articles you bought; gifts you received; repairs, or alterations made while you were out of the United States; and any items you brought home for someone else. (Items you intend to sell or use in a business must be declared separately). If an item was not purchased, but was given to you, make an estimate of its fair retail value in the country in which it was acquired, and declare that amount when you return.

WARNING: If you understate the value of, or otherwise misrepresent an article you have declared, you may be assessed penalties in addition to duty.

STANDARD EXEMPTION

Your duty-free exemption is \$400 if you are a returning U.S. resident and the items you acquired abroad accompany you. This duty-free exemption may include:

- 100 cigars and 200 cigarettes. (Products of Cuban tobacco are prohibited entry into the United States unless the product was purchased in Cuba in accordance with Office of Foreign Assets Control Regulations [31 CFR 515.560]).
- One liter of wine, beer, or liquor if you are at least 21 years old.

The duty-free exemption is \$600 if you are returning directly from a Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act country. The exemption is \$1,200 if returning from American Samoa, Guam, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Articles imported in excess of your exemptions will be subject to duty. If your purchases and acquisitions exceed the allowable duty-free exemption plus \$1,000, you must itemize in writing these purchases/acquisitions on the back of the declaration form. Sales slips, invoices, or other evidence of purchase will be helpful when you complete your Customs declaration.

If you are visiting the United States, your exemption is \$100. Visitors are eligible, however, for the same duty-free exemptions just described regarding cigars, cigarettes, and alcoholic beverages. The prohibition on Cuban tobacco products applies to both visitors and returning U.S. residents.

MAILING GIFTS AND PURCHASES FROM ABROAD

Gifts mailed from abroad to people in the United States can be received by them free of duty if the value of the gift does not exceed \$100. Gifts for more than one person can be consolidated into one package. Each recipient's name must be clearly marked on the package to be eligible for this waiver. Non-gift purchases mailed to the United States will pass duty-free if their value does not exceed \$200. The outer wrapping must be marked with: the fair retail value of the contents; the contents' identity (e.g., shirts, belts, watch, figurines, etc.); and whether the package is a gift (\$100 exemption) or for personal use (\$200 exemption).

NOTE: Duty owed on a mailed package must be paid after it arrives in the United States. No matter what a shop owner abroad may tell you, you cannot prepay duty.

AGRICULTURE ITEMS

All agricultural and food items brought into the United States must be declared to prevent the introduction of pests or crop disease into the U.S. food supply. To learn more about what agricultural products can be brought into the United States, contact: Quarantines, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737; 301.734.8645 (plant); 301.734.7885 (animal); or visit www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq on the web.

DUTY-FREE SHOPS

Articles purchased in "duty-free" shops, or on a plane or ship, are subject to Customs duty and other restrictions, but may be included in your exemption. Articles bought in American duty-free shops are subject to Customs duty and IRS tax if reentered into the United States.

PETS AND WILDLIFE

Cats and dogs must be free of evidence of diseases communicable to humans. Dogs older than three months must have proof of a rabies vaccination. This vaccination must have been given at least 30 days, but no more than one year, before the travel date. For more information, contact the Quarantine Division, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA 30333; 404.498.1670; visit www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dg/animal.htm on the web; or request Customs publication *Pets and Wildlife*.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service maintains very strict controls, restrictions, and prohibitions on importing animals, birds, turtles, wildlife, endangered species, and almost all products made from the foregoing. Contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203 or telephone 1.800.358.2104 for more information. Also contact the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), USDA, Hyattsville, MD 20782, for health-related requirements for animals other than pet dogs or cats.

CURRENCY

There is no limitation on the amount of monetary instruments that may be brought into or out of the United States. If you take out or bring in more than \$10,000 in currency or negotiable instruments, however, you must file a report (Customs Form 4790) with U.S. Customs. This can be done at any port of arrival or departure. Failure to do so can result in civil or criminal penalties.

SEARCH AUTHORITY

Title 19, Section 1582 of the U.S. Code authorizes Customs officers to search, inspect, and/or examine, all persons, luggage, and merchandise discharged or unladen from a carrier arriving in the United States from a foreign destination. Customs randomly selects individuals for inspections to ensure compliance with U.S. laws.

U.S. CUSTOMS CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Customer service standards, which are our pledge to the traveler, are posted throughout Customs inspection areas. They guarantee that Customs officers will be professional and courteous to everyone, and that Customs will clear the majority of international travelers within five minutes of claiming baggage. A supervisor or Passenger Service Representative will be on hand in the Customs area to answer any Customs-related questions or concerns. If you feel that we have not lived up to our standards and you wish to lodge a written complaint, be sure your letter includes your phone number. A Customs official will contact you about your concerns within one day of receiving your letter.

PLAY IT SAFE

This is only a brief overview of Customs requirements. If you want additional information, please contact your local Customs office. You will find U.S. Customs listed in the "U.S. Government" section of your local phone directory under the Treasury Department listing or visit our Web Site at www.customs.gov. You may also call U.S. Customs in Washington, D.C., at 202.354.1000. We will be happy to send you a copy of our brochure *Know Before You Go* which describes in detail everything that you should . . . know before you go.



**U.S. Customs Service
Washington, D.C. 20229**

Please visit the U.S. Customs Web Site at www.customs.gov